

Message Text

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PAGE 01 YAOUND 01917 031507Z
ACTION AF-10

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P R 031400Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1818
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY BANGUI
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 1917

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: AMGT, PFOR, SHUM, OGEN, CM
SUBJ: OPEN FORUM INSIDE EMBASSY YAOUNDE

REF: (A) YAOUNDE A-13; (B) YAOUNDE A-15; (C) YAOUNDE A-19;
(D) YAOUNDE 1899 (E) STATE A-309 (NOTAL)

1. WE CONCLUDED OUR IN-HOUSE OPEN FORUM DISCUSSION OF US POLICY
TOWARD CAMEROON WITH A SECOND MEETING, REPORT ON WHICH (REF C) IS
BEING POUCHED MAY 5. MEETING HAD APPROXIMATELY THE SAME
ATTENDANCE AS THE ONE REPORTED IN REF B.

2. ON SUBSTANTIVE POLICY, THE DISCUSSION RECONFIRMED THE
INSTITUTIONALIZATION THESIS, DESPITE (OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF)
THE CRITIQUE OF IT WHICH ORIGINALLY GAVE RISE TO OUR INTERNAL
DEBATE. THE THESIS HAS IT THAT, IF PRESIDENT AHIDJO SHOULD
DISAPPEAR FOR SOME REASON, THE GOVERNMENT OF CAMEROON IS LIKELY TO
BE CARRIED ON PRETTY MUCH AS BEFORE, BUT FOR THAT VERY REASON,
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PAGE 02 YAOUND 01917 031507Z

AHIDJO IS LESS LIKELY TO DISAPPEAR THAN ANY OF HIS COUNTERPARTS IN
THE WIDER REGION. HE HAS BEEN AS SUCCESSFUL AS HE HAS IN BUILDING
CAMEROON'S INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT BECAUSE, INTER ALIA,
HE HAS TAUGHT BOTH THE PUBLIC AND ITS SERVANTS THE DISTINCTION
BETWEEN OFFICE AND INCUMBENT, BECAUSE HE HAS BROUGHT ALONG A
SECOND GENERATION OF CIVIL AND MILITARY SERVANTS WHOSE AVERAGE
IS PROBABLY LESS THAN 35, AND HE HAS ESCHEWED A CULT OF PERSONALITY

OF HIMSELF BY CONTRAST WITH SOME SIMILARLY SUCCESSFUL OTHER AFRICAN LEADERS, AHIDJO IS ONLY 52.

3. THE DISCUSSION ALSO RECONFIRMED MY CONFIDENCE IN THE CORRECTNESS OF US POLICY TOWARD CAMEROON, AS IT HAS BEEN CONCEIVED, CONCEPTUALIZED, AND ELABORATED BETWEEN THE 1976 PARA AND THE 1977 PARM, BY THE DEPARTMENT, THE INSPECTORS, AND THE EMBASSY. THE CORE OF THAT POLICY IS US RECOGNITION OF CAMEROON'S - NOT REPEAT NOT AHIDJO'S OR HIS GOVERNMENT'S - IMPORTANCE IN THIS UNSTABLE REGION AND BEYOND; THE DESIRABILITY IN TERMS OF US INTERESTS OF US RESPONSIVENESS TO CAMEROON'S HITHERTO MODEST REQUESTS FOR US DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE ACCORDING TO CAMEROONIAN PRIORITIES; AND THE UNDESIRABILITY OF OUR IMPOSING UPON THE CAMEROON GOVERNMENT VARIOUS AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT CAMEROON'S PROBLEMS (PARTICULARLY IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE) AND SOLUTIONS TO THEM MAY BE.

4. I FOCUSED THE DISCUSSION ON THE CRUCIAL QUESTION OF ALTERNATIVES, BOTH TO US POLICY AND TO AHIDJO'S GOVERNMENT. CONCLUSION WAS THAT A SUCCESSOR REGIME THAT CAME TO POWER BY NON-PEACEFUL MEANS, ON THE MODEL OF MANY IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, WAS LIKELY TO SA LESS EFFICIENT, LESS COMPETENT, MORE CORRUPT, FND TO DEVELOP A NEGATIVE RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS, WHEREAS THE INCUMBENT GOVERNMENT IS STEADILY AND DELIBERATELY IMPROVING ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD, IN MY CONSIDERED JUDGMENT - QUITE POSSIBLY UNDER DIRECT AND INDIRECT US INFLUENCE. AN UNRESPONSIVE US POLICY WOULD PROBABLY PUSH CAMEROON AWAY FROM ITS CURRENTLY GENUINE NON-ALIGNMENT, EITHER BACK TOWARD RENEWED DEPENDENCE UPON FRANCE OR, MORE LIKELY, AND AS A KIND OF CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 YAOUND 01917 031507Z

INSURANCE, TOWARD THE SOVIETS.

5. THE FIRST MEETING OF EMBASSY OPEN FORUM (REF B, LAST PARA) BROUGHT UP THE SUGGESTION THAT THE EMBASSY TRY TO FIND OUT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ABOUT THE MILITARY, WHO ARE LIKELY TO PLAY A KEY ROLE WHEN AND IF A SUCCESSOR REGIME COMES TO POWER. BUT WHETHER OR NOT SUCH CHANGE OCCURS, THE MOST IMPORTANT ROLE IN CAMEROON WILL BE PLAYED BY THE YOUNG GENERATION OF MINISTERS AND CIVIL SERVANTS MENTIONED ABOVE, WHO BECAUSE OF THEIR COMPETENCE, SELF-CONFIDENCE, AND EXPERIENCE WITH RESPONSIBILITY, WILL BE AROUND FOR A LONG TIME TO COME, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS. (THE EXPERIENCE OF LESS STABLE COUNTRIES IN THE REGION, FROM NIGERIA THROUGH GHANA TO CHAD AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE SUPPORTS THIS EXPECTATION.) THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN CONCENTRATING HEAVILY AND WITH SUCCESS ON HIS GROUP, THROUGH ENGAGING THEM IN SUBSTANTIVE CONVERSATIONS, SPONSORING TRIPS TO THE US FOR THEM, AND BY ALL OTHER AVAILABLE MEANS. THE FACT THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE CAMEROONIANS AT OUR DINNER APRIL 29, WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY TEN MINISTERS AND VICE MINISTERS

(REF D), COMES FROM THIS GROUP SHOWS THAT THE BELIEVE THE
US HAS MORE TO OFFER THEM
AND CAMEROON THAN DOES ANY OTHER
COUNTRY. THE EMBASSY HAS RELATIVELY EASY ACCESS TO THEM AND
SHOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE FULL USE OF IT.

6. I FOUND THE DISCUSSION USEFUL BECAUSE

-- (1) IT BROUGHT OUT SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS ON THE PART OF
EMBASSY OFFICERS OF WHAT US POLICY WAS AND WHAT PROPER FUNCTIONS OF
EMBASSY ARE IN OVERALL US GOVERNMENT POLICY PROCESS;
-- FOR IT BROUGHT TO ALL PARTICIPANTS' AWARENESS KNOWLEDGE OF
SOME FACTS WHICH MAY PREVIOUSLY HAVE BEEN SHARED ONLY BY MYSELF
THE DCM, AND THE OTHER OFFICER(S) WHO FIRST BROUGHT THEM TO OUR
ATTENTION, DESPITE ALMOST DAILY COUNTRY TEAM MEETINGS, SINCE SUCH
AWARENESS SEEMS TO BE STIMULATED MOST EFFECTIVELY BY MEANS OF
ENGAGING INDIVIDUALS IN MORE OR LESS CONTROVERSIAL DISCUSSION
FOCUSED ON SUBJECT AT HAND.
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PAGE 04 YAOUND 01917 031507Z

-- (3) IT SERVED OTHER EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES, BOTH SUBSTANTIVE
AND PROCEDURAL, ESPECIALLY FOR OUR JUNIOR OFFICERS.

7. DISCUSSION WAS PARTICULARLY TIMELY IN VIEW OF CURRENT BUILD-UP
OF OPEN MANIFESTATIONS OF CAMEROONIAN GOODWILL FOR US, OUR
PENDING REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO ESTABLISH WATTS STATION,
AND CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE, WHERE QUESTIONS OF FUTURE OF
MODERATE REGIMES, DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO THEM,
HUMAN RIGHTS, CORRUPTION, AND ALTERNATIVE US POLICIES WILL BE
PUT INTO BROADER REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL CONTEXTS.
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